Wisconsin’s pristine woods and waters are under attack once again from mining interests. In this edition of Network News, we focus on the proposed mining and the consequent environmental damage, especially the impact on the waters, on which all life depends. Contributors Al Gedicks, author of “Resource Rebels: Native Challenges to Mining and Oil Corporations,” and Native American activist, environmentalist, democracy advocate and author Winona LaDuke both spoke at WNPJ’s Fall Member Assembly and Awards Reception. Participants also heard from Jessica Koski, Keweenaw Bay (Michigan) Indian Community Tribal Member.

Please use the enclosed postcards to let state legislators know you’re concerned about the proposed mining. For updates, please visit www.savethewatersedge.com, an excellent website by northern Wisconsin activists, wnpj.org, and wrpc.net.

EXTREME MINING IN WISCONSIN

By: Al Gedicks, Executive Secretary, Wisconsin Resources Protection Council (wrpc.net)

The entire Lake Superior region of Wisconsin, Michigan and Minnesota is in the midst of a mineral exploration boom driven by record prices for copper, gold, nickel and iron ore. In the rush to provide much-needed jobs in the depressed economies of many former mining communities, environmental regulations are being ignored or rewritten to accommodate a new era of mineral exploitation.

The proposed low-grade iron ore (taconite) strip mine and pelletizing factory in the Penokee Hills in northern Wisconsin are a technological disaster in the making. Gogebic Taconite (GTac) has leases for the mineral rights on 22,000 acres of the Penokee-Gogebic Range, covering 22 miles in Iron and Ashland Counties. GTac is owned by the Cline Group, a privately held mining company based in Florida. Christopher Cline is a billionaire who owns large coal reserves in Illinois and Appalachia.

The proposed mine would extract taconite by removing about 650 feet of overburden (the “waste” rock that doesn’t contain iron ore) and creating a narrow pit four and a half miles long, one-half mile wide and at least 1000 feet deep. When completed, the pit will extend for 22 miles. Massive piles of mine waste (the “tailings” left after the ore has been removed and processed) will drain their toxic wastes into the Bad River watershed, which flows into Lake Superior and provides drinking water for the city of Ashland and nearby towns.

Water from the Penokees also feeds the wild rice beds of the Bad River band of Lake Superior Ojibwe. Wild rice is a sacred plant for the Ojibwe and an important food source. The tribe’s wild rice beds are the largest in the state. The proposed mine’s massive withdrawal of water from the Penokee Hills will also drastically reduce the flow of water to the Kakagon Sloughs, where the wild rice grows in a 16,000-acre complex of wetlands, woodlands and sand dune ecosystems.

The Bad River Tribal Council has passed a strong resolution against the project and met with Governor Walker to explain how this proposed mine is a direct threat to their existence as a tribe. Prior to meeting with the governor, tribal chairman Mike Wiggins said, “It is clear to us that there’s no way that an open-pit mine in the Bad River watershed can be operated without significant environmental impacts to our lands, our waters, and ultimately our people.” The tribe has obtained EPA approval for authority to enforce tribal water quality standards on the reservation. “Water and water levels are non-negotiable,” said Wiggins. “They are for our survival.”

GTac has never discussed their proposal with the Bad River Tribe, but they have invested in a major public relations offensive with radio ads proclaiming mining can be done safely while providing jobs for generations of miners. Such promises have to be evaluated in light of...
the boom-bust nature of mining and the pollution problems from taconite mining on Minnesota’s Iron Range.

In January 2011, representatives of GTac told a public audience at Ashland’s Great Lakes Visitor Center that they were willing to abide by Wisconsin’s strict mining regulations and would not seek to change existing laws. Four months later, Wisconsin legislators were promoting a 186 page Iron Mining Bill drafted by GTac and the Wisconsin Mining Association (WMA) which would drastically speed up the mine permitting process and severely limit the ability of the public and Indian Nations to have meaningful input during the mining permit process. The bill was crafted so that GTac’s mine wastes could be dumped in wetlands, along lakes or streams, or within a floodplain. The bill also limits the ability of the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources to verify that the information submitted by the mining company in its permit application is accurate. If the DNR has not completed their review of the application within 30 days, the permits would be automatically approved.

GTac and the Wisconsin Mining Association claim that iron mining is not comparable to metallic sulfide mining because it does not have the potential to create acid mine drainage, and should therefore be exempted from Wisconsin’s “Prove it First” law. That law requires companies proposing to mine in Wisconsin be able to prove that a similar mine elsewhere operated for at least 10 years, and was reclaimed following closure for at least 10 years, without polluting groundwater. However if there are sulfide minerals in the host rock (as is the case in the Penokee Hills), there is always the possibility of acid mine drainage. Taconite mining in Minnesota has resulted in both acid mine drainage and mercury contamination downstream from taconite tailings piles. After the Iron Mining Bill was leaked to the state’s environmental community, there was an immediate public reaction that forced the cancellation of public hearings on the bill. GTac has suspended its exploration program until a revised version of the Iron Mining bill is passed. Governor Walker had made passage of a revised Iron Mining bill one of his top legislative priorities.

Any discussion of mining as an engine of growth must confront the mounting evidence of what economists call the “resource curse.” This refers to the paradox that countries (and communities) with an abundance of natural resources have less economic growth than those countries (and communities) without these natural resources. Appalachia (coal), the Ozarks (lead), the Upper Peninsula of Michigan (iron and copper) or Minnesota’s Iron Range all provide examples of the resource curse. Modern mining operations are highly automated, requiring highly skilled workers, but far fewer workers than in the past. The most competitive mines extract more minerals with fewer workers.

Finally, the emphasis upon mining jobs ignores the impact of mining on existing jobs in tourism, forestry, the Lake Superior fishery and the subsistence economies of the Lake Superior Ojibwe tribes that have treaty-protected harvest rights in the ceded territories of Wisconsin, Michigan and Minnesota.

The grassroots opposition to the Penokee mine has already prevented the Iron Mining bill from being rushed through the legislature. If the recent legislative public hearing on mining in Hurley is any indication, a revised Iron Mining bill is likely to generate strong opposition from the same constituency that successfully opposed the Crandon metallic sulfide mine at the headwaters of the Wolf River in northeastern Wisconsin, in the 1980s and ’90s. Wisconsin has a proud history of stopping environmentally destructive mining projects in their tracks; we must do so again to save the Penokes.
On October 8, Native American community leader, activist and author Winona LaDuke spoke at WNPJ’s peacemaker and lifetime achievement awards reception in Madison. Her inspiring speech was titled “Militarism, Mining or Living?” to highlight the choices facing our state and region today. Winona is speaking out strongly against the new mining push in the Great Lakes region, which threatens Native land, waters, wild rice beds and sacred sites. Here’s an excerpt of Winona’s talk, in which she refers to the proposed iron mine in northern Wisconsin’s Penokee Hills, opposed by the Bad River Band of Lake Superior Chippewa, and the proposed nickel and copper mine at Eagle Rock in Michigan, opposed by the Keweenaw Bay Indian Community.

You can’t quantify everything. And I say that because we live in a society that spends a lot of time counting. Everything that you measure doesn’t count. And everything that counts can’t be measured. That’s to say there is no way to quantify the value of sacred places, whether it’s Eagle Rock in upper Michigan, one of our most sacred places as indigenous peoples, or whether it’s the value of wild rice as a spiritual food, or whether it is the fact that water is sacred…

We live in empire. As we talk about these issues, whether it is unions, the right to fair wages, the environment, or militarism, we are smack dab in the middle of empire and we are entrenched. We’ve become apologists, at some level, for our practice of consuming a third of the world’s resources. It requires constant intervention into other people’s lands, constant violations of other people’s human rights, this level of consumption…

Around 1800, the emissaries of the Queen of England found the Ontonagon boulder of pure copper on the Keweenaw Peninsula [in Michigan]. It took them about 25 years to figure out how to haul that darn thing out of there. They did, setting in motion a series of treaties that annexed the North. As you know well, in the state of Wisconsin, the Ojibwe relinquished some of our land but did not relinquish our harvesting rights. We retained them, all the way into Minnesota.

A series of four treaties gave the companies access to the land. By 1849, the copper on the Keweenaw Peninsula led world production. In 1890 and for 50 years, the Mesabi iron range in Northern Minnesota was 75 percent of iron ore production in the U.S., leading the world. From that emerged most of the major multinational corporations in mining — Kennecott, Anaconda, 3M, Weyerhaeuser…

There’s not a lot of intergenerational building of justice. Nor is there respect…

I was talking to Al Gedicks, one of my great colleagues and one of your Board members. … We aren’t exactly sure, but a good chunk of what is needed in new minerals exploitation is not necessarily for refrigerators in China. A lot of it is for the military…

The relationship between this economic system and this military is entrenched. This book [The Militarization of Indian Country, co-authored by Winona LaDuke and Sean Cruz] was written largely to focus on Indian Country, because in our community, we have the highest rate of enlistment. We have the highest rate of living veterans. And we have the highest rate of occupation of land.

Your snapshot here is Badger [Army Ammunition Plant], on Ho Chunk land. … They don’t call a lot of these reservations Fort something for nothing. A lot of them are enjoined or occupied by present or historic military bases, which means that when you expand the military, you also generally expand the contamination that exists in Indian Country…

Where we are going has to address this issue, of how militarized we are in our communities, as well as in our economy. … In our Anishinaabe teachings, we have a set of prophecies. One is the prophecy of the seventh fire. What those prophets said to our Anishinaabe people a few thousand years ago, they talked about different things that were going to happen to us. They referred to those as fires… [The prophets described the seventh fire as two paths.]

One path they said would be well worn, but it would be scorched. The other path, they said, was not well worn and it was green. It would be our choice upon which path to embark…. We have the ability to not keep scorching. It’s a personal and a societal choice.

The forces that we deal with in today’s globalization, whether they are called Cline [the company pushing for an iron mine in Wisconsin’s Penokee Hills] or Exxon, did not spin straw into gold. They robbed their way. They created a lot of misery and death. This is a society that still, generally, aggrandizes wealth. It doesn’t ask how they got rich, just acts as if there was some entitlement…

That battle is about a linear worldview and a linear economy. There is no reciprocity or intergenerational justice in that economic system. There is no semblance of reaffirmation of a relationship to place or to land. Mining companies generally mine and move on. Oil companies and militaries generally move in and move on.
HAS THE WAR IN IRAQ ENDED?

In late October, President Obama announced that the U.S. military would begin withdrawing from Iraq. While corporate media reactions were predictable, responses from many in the peace movement were muted. WNPJ’s Steve Burns asked on the Network’s blog, “What words can we find to mark the end of a war that never should have happened in the first place? ... The most common response to Obama’s announcement was ‘Yes, but...’”

Celeste Zappala, the mother of Sgt Sherwood Baker who was killed on April 26, 2004 in Baghdad, wrote the following: “So we can rejoice that a day will come when soldiers will not be in danger in Iraq, and we can pray that all those injured in body and spirit will be offered the healing they need and deserve. Can we promise them we as a Nation will never again send them in to wars based on lies? I fear not, I fear the business of war will always require a market, and unless we are all powerfully vocal, the idea of wars of choice will perpetuate.”

You can read the rest of her statement, and reactions from others, at militaryfamiliesspeakout.com.

Network News will focus on Iraq in our next newsletter issue.

WNPJ LAUNCHES A CAMPAIGN TO END THE WAR ON WORKERS AND BRING OUR WAR $$ HOME

Around the world, the economic crisis has precipitated an aggressive attack on workers, retirees and all recipients of government-provided social services. Seizing their opportunity, the wealthy and powerful have taken advantage of the crisis to attempt to impose a program of austerity on the rest of us. In response, people across the world, from Madison to Madrid to Tel Aviv, have taken to the streets to defend their rights.

In the U.S., Wisconsin has become a focal point for this struggle. When newly-elected Republican Governor Scott Walker took an austerity program initiated under his Democratic predecessor and expanded it to include unprecedented attacks on the collective-bargaining rights of public sector workers, he sparked a populist uprising larger than any seen before in our state’s history. Today, those on both sides of the struggle between workers and capital look to Wisconsin for signs of how the struggle will evolve.

To date, anti-austerity activists have not effectively made the connection between cuts to education, health care and other social services and our nation’s record spending on war and “security.” As a result, the national debate about austerity seldom even mentions military spending.

Why haven’t we been more successful in “connecting the dots” between cuts at home and war spending abroad? In part, this is because much of the austerity program is imposed at the state and local levels, while military spending is traditionally considered a national issue. Another difficulty is the natural tendency of activists to work within their own “issue silos” combined with a lack of relationships between pro-peace organizations and labor unions and others on the front lines of the struggle for adequate social services.

As the only statewide multi-issue coalition combining in its membership both peace groups and labor groups, WNPJ is uniquely qualified to make these connections. We will be working over the next year with you, our members, to strengthen ties between labor and peace groups, bring war spending into the austerity debate, and make war spending an issue in state and local elections.

If you’re interested in working with WNPJ to pass “war $$ home” resolutions by your labor council, union local, city council or county board, please let us know! Call (608) 250-9240 or email outreach@wnpj.org.

PEACE-MAKERS IN IRAQ

Photo from Sami Rasouli (top row, center) who wrote: “In the picture is a Christian man, a Muslim man, a Native American, a Jewish man and a Viking. See, it’s not so hard to meet as equals after all.”
ON VETERANS’ DAY
by David Giffey

If you aren’t a military veteran, chances are you have a family member or close friend who is. There are estimated to be about 23.4 million living U.S. military veterans of all eras among about 308 million Americans counted in the 2010 census. Major American wars beginning with the Revolution in 1775 involved nearly 42 million in wartime military service. More than 1.3 million Americans died during wartime military service. It’s likely that even more Americans are, or were, veterans of so-called peacetime military service during momentary lapses between wars.

It’s no wonder that Veterans Day, formerly Armistice Day, attracts so much attention in the River Valley and elsewhere if for no other reason than the U.S. has produced a lot of military veterans. I’m a veteran of the Vietnam War, and I’m preparing to participate in Veterans Day in my own manner. Along with memories of fellow veterans, uppermost in my mind are the unusual changes wrought over the past 93 years to what originated as an armistice ending the fighting of World War I on November 11, 1918. Bells were rung to celebrate the 11th hour of the 11th day of the 11th month when the armistice took effect, to be followed in a few months by the signing of the Treaty of Versailles.

President Wilson proclaimed the first Armistice Day an opportunity for America “to show her sympathy with peace and justice in the councils of the nations.”

A resolution passed by Congress in 1926 stated, “It is fitting that the recurring anniversary of this date should be commemorated with thanksgiving and prayer and exercises designed to perpetuate peace through good will and mutual understanding between nations.”

A 1938 Act of Congress made November 11 a legal holiday dedicated to world peace.

Since World War I was called “The War to End All Wars,” and since that didn’t prove to be true, Congress changed “armistice” to “veterans” in 1954. At the urging of veterans’ groups, November 11 was thereafter reserved as a day to honor American veterans of all wars, and the commemoration of a day for peace and justice receded from collective memory.

In River Valley schools, a tradition of Veterans Day has grown to involve members of the American Legion, Veterans of Foreign Wars, and their auxiliaries, and the preparation of patriotic programs by students and teachers. This year I will also participate in school programs, as a member of Veterans for Peace. I look forward to that opportunity with respect equal to that I hold for my fellow veterans in the VFW and Legion, and for the vast majority of veterans who haven’t joined any veterans’ organizations.

It is often said that all war veterans desire peace. In general, I believe that to be an honest statement, a logical conclusion based on firsthand experience. If you’ve survived being the target of a deadly weapon, the notion of everlasting peace might gain appeal. In the 45 years since my war experience ended, I have spent a great deal of time contemplating its meaning and struggling to assign it a purpose. I know that many veterans of my generation’s war share my misgivings and express them in a variety of ways, or perhaps not at all. Keeping silence after war is a common reaction, and a necessary one for some veterans. They are entitled to the right to silence.

Silence, in fact, was a ritual during the early years when November 11 was celebrated as Armistice Day. Citizens were urged to observe a moment of silence on the 11th hour of the 11th day of the 11th month, perhaps to better hear the pealing of bells proclaiming peace. This year, we can add the 11th year to the string of numbers. For the only time in our lives, we will experience 11 a.m. November 11, 2011. A moment of silence in expectation of peace is appropriate. I’ll be listening.

This story appeared originally in the Spring Green Home News, on November 16, 2011

UPDATES

In a follow up to last year’s article on the use of race-based logos and mascots (edit), we are happy to report that the Menomonie School District in Dunn County has committed to change the name of their athletic teams. Known up to now as the “Indians,” they will in future be the “Mustangs.” This follows a change made in June by the Osseo Fairchild School District, which was ordered to drop the name “Chieftains” by the WI Department of Public Instruction.

Secondly, we are pleased to note that the military’s use of drones, the subject of our last issue of Network News, is now gaining greater attention in the mainstream media, including an October 24 front-page report in the Christian Science Monitor. The article, titled “The New Shape of War: The next generation of drones and robots is changing the nature of combat - and raising profound moral questions,” is by Anna Mulrine. You can read it (and compare with Network News coverage) at www.CSMonitor.com.
THE PRECIOUS WATERS OF THE PENOKEES

To highlight the natural beauty threatened by mining, WNPJ organized a week-long display of scenic photographs of the Penokee Hills, in the State Capitol Rotunda in mid-November. The participating photographers were Pete Rasmussen and Azael Meza. Carl Sack of WNPJ, Frank Koehn of Save the Water’s Edge (and Ashland), and Azael Meza (from Lac du Flambeau) spoke at the opening of the exhibit, titled “Precious Waters of the Penokees.” The exhibition was covered by the Associated Press, Ashland Current and Daily Globe in northern Michigan. The photographs showed the unspoiled splendor of the area that would be affected by the proposed open-pit mine. The photo exhibit coincided with the first hearing on metallic mining in Wisconsin held by the Senate Select Committee on Mining Jobs on November 15.

CONGRATULATIONS TO PEACEMAKERS

Our peacemakers of the year awards give WNPJ the opportunity to thank some of the many extraordinary activists around our state, and to take hope from their accomplishments. This year, our youth peacemaker was Racine resident Christian Pacheco, whose advocacy for immigrant rights has been remarkable. In 2010, in a speech to a rally of more than 200 people in front of Congressman Paul Ryan’s Racine office, Christian took the courageous step of making public his own undocumented status, explaining that he was brought to the United States from Mexico by his parents when he was just 5 years old.

Our adult peacemaker was Athens resident Tony Shultz, who operates Stoney Acres farm; organized the Farmer Labor Solidarity Tractorcade at the March 12th rally at the state Capitol, considered by many to be the largest rally in Wisconsin history; and serves on the Board of Family Farm Defenders, a WNPJ member group.

Our senior peacemaker was Madison resident Dr. Judith Ladinsky, who co-founded the U.S. Committee for Scientific Cooperation with Vietnam; has collected hundreds of thousands of dollars’ worth of medical supplies, medicines, medical books, and equipment for Vietnamese hospitals; and traveled to Vietnam more than 100 times, conducting research and promoting public health.

At our awards reception on October 8th, we also presented Dennis Bergren, a former WNPJ Board member from Madison, with a special award in recognition of his tireless work with the WI Books to Prisoners project, sending books to LGBT prisoners across the country. Last but certainly not least, Senator Fred Risser received our Lifetime Achievement Award for his many contributions, from sponsoring one of the first lesbian and gay rights bills in the country back in 1982, to co-founding WNPJ in 1991, to establishing the state recycling program to the first urban state park, to taking a stand for workers’ rights as one of the ‘Fighting 14’ earlier this year.

MEMBER NEWS

Welcome to three new Member Groups

Solidarity Sing-along:
The Solidarity Sing-along is well known to WNPJ - and they’re now a member group! The Sing-along was started by WNPJ’s Steve Burns in early March, and has been guided with soul and harmony by Chris Reeder through more than 200 consecutive weekday sing-alongs. You can contact Chris Reeder at barnardine@yahoo.com or follow the singers on FaceBook: www.facebook.com/SolidaritySingAlong and via Twitter: twitter.com/#/SolidaritySing or - best of all - join them any weekday at noon, in the Capitol Rotunda.

PFLAG-Madison
The Madison Chapter of Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays (PFLAG), a support and advocacy group dedicated to making life better for GLBT persons and their families and friends. All meetings are held on the third Sunday of the month, except summer months. Contact: Tom Dean and Seiko Yoshinaga, PFLAG Madison, 4221 Venetian Ln, Madison WI 53708-6655. Phone: 608-848-2333. pflagmadison@yahoo.com, http://pflag-madison.org.

Citizens for Global Solutions – Milwaukee
Citizens for Global Solutions envisions a future in which nations work together to abolish war, protect our rights and freedoms, and solve the problems facing humanity that no nation can solve alone. This vision requires effective democratic global institutions that will apply the rule of law while respecting the diversity and autonomy of national and local communities. Contact: Debbie Metke, Address: 9832 W. 7 Mile Rd, Franksville, WI 53126, Phone: 414-881-0904 E-Mail: dmetke@gmail.com, Website info: archive1.globalsolutions.org/involved/chapters/chapters_contacts.html.
WNPJ Membership Renewal Form

Name_________________________________________________________
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Contact Person for Organization Membership ______________________
I prefer my next newsletter on-line only, please ______________________

Send completed form to: Wisconsin Network for Peace and Justice
122 State Street, #405
Madison, WI 53703

Phone 608-250-9240; E-Mail info@wnpj.org; Website www.wnpj.org. WNPJ is a 501(c)3 organization and donations are tax-deductible.

FROM THE CO-CHAIRS

Co-Chair Tom McGrath:
There are 168 member groups in WNPJ, and over 400 individual members. WNPJ is going strong in its twenty-first year. It is an honor to be this year’s co-chair of the WNPJ Board, along with Dena Eakles. Thanks to all outgoing Board members for their service, and welcome to all incoming. Thank you to Jim Draeger (past Chair) and Mary Beth Schlagheck (past Co-Chair) for their service!

WNPJ has four work groups: Anti-Militarism, Immigrant Rights, Prison Reform, Environment, and three committees: Change Team, Outreach and Fundraising. All members of WNPJ are welcome to be on any committee or work group. No matter where you live, you can connect via a telephone and email. Your input is welcomed. WNPJ and its member groups address a wide range of social justice issues, from mining to economic justice to women’s and LGBT rights. I encourage all members to do what you can. Pursue the issue that grabs you. Do whatever it takes! We are the ones that can make it happen.

Co-Chair Dena Eakles:
It is an honor to stand with you for peace and justice. In this time of great transition in our state and world, the challenge is to build a coalition that can include everyone. By extending the hand of goodwill, by welcoming all to the table for conversation, and by standing firmly in nonviolence, we can do this. This year, as WNPJ supports your organization or your individual efforts towards peace and justice, I ask you to welcome others into our Network. As Tom indicated, there are many important issues before us. Let us find creative, passionate ways to bring about the change we know must come.

A SHOUT-OUT TO WNPJ’S VOLUNTEERS

WNPJ deeply appreciates the many volunteers who allow us to have an impact beyond our modest resources! Thanks to Fei Ma, who continues to help with website updates, and to Kathy Walsh, for her willingness to take on anything that needs doing, on a weekly basis. Thanks and congratulations for two wonderful events, to our assembly and awards reception planning committee: Mary Beth Schlagheck, Jim Draeger, Barb Munson, Jennifer First, Tom McGrath, Bill Christofferson and Dena Eakles. Thanks to Arboretum CoHousing and the Farley Center for Peace, Justice and Sustainability for hosting Winona LaDuke during her visit to Madison, and to Al Gedicks and Jessica Koski, for sharing their expertise on mining issues with us. Lastly, our deep gratitude to our outgoing Board members and our enthusiastic welcome to our new Board officers and members at large!

AN ORCHID TO...

Occupy Wall Street movement, which has transformed our national debate about wealth inequality and the influence of money in politics.

AN ONION TO...

Wisconsin State Legislature for ordering the arrest of people carrying cameras in the Assembly gallery, while permitting the carrying of guns in there, and for removing even a minimal training requirement from the new “hidden guns in public” law.
Please check your membership renewal date on the attached mailing label .........